

AUGUST 17, 1978

VICTORY FOR E.R.A.?
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS VOTED 233 TO 189 TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE FOR THE RATIFICATION, BY THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF STATES, OF THE PROPOSED WOMEN'S EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION, FROM MARCH 1979 TO JUNE 1982. THE VOTE WAS AN IMPORTANT VICTORY FOR ERA SUPPORTERS ALTHOUGH THE EXTENSION, WHICH ALSO REQUIRES APPROVAL BY THE SENATE, IS FAR FROM CERTAIN. THE DEBATE WILL CONTINUE FOR MANY MONTHS TO COME. TODAY, WE'LL HEAR SOME PRO AND CON ARGUMENTS FROM TWO WOMEN WITH STRONGLY OPPOSING VIEWS: ELEANOR SMEAL, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN (NOW) AND PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY, HEAD OF THE "STOP ERA" ORGANIZATION. BUT FIRST SOME BACKGROUND ON THE PROPOSED WOMEN'S RIGHTS AMENDMENT - ERA.

VOICE:

THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES APPROVED ERA IN 1971. THE SENATE PASSED IT IN 1972. THE WORDING OF THE OPERATIVE CLAUSE WAS SIMPLE. IT READ: "EQUALITY OF RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW SHALL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THE UNITED STATES OR ANY STATE ON ACCOUNT OF SEX."

THE AMENDMENT WAS GIVEN SEVEN YEARS FOR RATIFICATION, BY THE STATES OR UNTIL MARCH 22, 1979. WITHIN A YEAR OF ITS PASSAGE, IT WAS APPROVED BY 30 OF THE 38 STATE LEGISLATURES NEEDED FOR RATIFICATION. BY 1975, FOUR MORE STATES HAD RATIFIED IT. BUT IN THE INTERVENING YEARS THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE RATIFICATION WHILE LEGISLATURES IN THE REMAINING 15 STATES HAVE VOTED IT DOWN AND FOUR OF THE STATES WHICH HAVE

ALREADY APPROVED IT HAVE VOTED TO RESCIND. BY 1978, ERA NO LONGER LOOKED LIKE A SURE THING. TO AVOID DEFEAT, ITS SUPPORTERS ASKED FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME FOR RATIFICATION. THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ADOPTED THE EXTENSION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MONTH OF AUGUST, AND ON AUGUST 15, THE FULL HOUSE VOTED TO EXTEND THE RATIFICATION DEADLINE BY 39 MONTHS, OR 3 YEARS, 3 MONTHS AND 8 DAYS, TO BE EXCCT.

WHY DOES ERA NEED THIS EXTRA TIME? ANSWERS ELANOR SMEAL, PRESIDENT PF N.O.W. (NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN):

TAPE: CUT ONE -- SMEAL

"THE NEED FOR THE ERA IS AS STRONG AS IT WAS IN 1972, IN FACT IT'S EVEN MORE, WHICH IS SHOWN THROUGH COURT CASES AND THROUGH THE FACT THAT WOMEN ARE STILL UNDERPAID, STILL MAKES LESS THAN MEN, 60 PER CENT OF THE AVERAGE OF WHAT MEN MAKE. THE NEED FOR ERA IS AS GREAT TODAY AS IT WAS IN 1923, WHEN IT WAS FIRST INTRODUCED, AND THE SUPPORT FOR IT IS STRONG."

VOICE:

(OPT) ECHOING MRS. SMEAL'S BELIEF, IN THE DAY-LONG HOUSE DEBATE, WAS REPRESENTATIVE MARC L. MARKS (REPUBLICAN OF PENNSYLVANIA) WHO SAID "WE MUST PUT OUT THE MESSAGE THAT THOSE IN THIS CHAMBER WILL NO LONGER STAND FOR DISCRIMINATION", AND REPRESENTATIVE HELEN MEYNER (DEMOCRAT OF NEW JERSEY) WHO REMARKED THAT "PROFOUND SOCIAL CHANGE HAS NEVER BEEN HASTILY ACCOMPLISHED". (END OPT)

THE REASON WHY ERA IS IN TROUBLE IS BECAUSE IT INVOLVES SO MANY POSSIBLE YET UNFORSEABLE SOCIAL CHANGES. OPPONENTS VIEW ERA AS AN "ASSAULT" ON THE LAWS THAT REQUIRE MEN TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES -- SOMETHING THEY BELIEVE COULD BRING ABOUT UNDERSIRABLE CHANGES IN THE WHOLE SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

HAVING HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT ERA, MANY STATES HAVE TURNED IT DOWN WHILE IDAHO, TENNESSEE, NEBRASKA AND KENTUCKY WANT

TO RESCIND. BUT THE NEWLY VOTED EXTENSION BARS STATES FROM REVERSING PREVIOUS APPROVAL. SCHLAFLY, A NATIONAL LEADER OF OPPOSITION TO THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT, CALLS THE EXTENSION BILL, UNFAIR, ILLEGAL, UNEQUAL AND DISCRIMINATORY:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- SCHLAFLY

"WHAT IT DOES IS TO ALLOW THE STATES FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS FROM NO TO YES, BUT TO FORBID THEM THE RIGHT TO CHANGE FROM YES TO NO. IT TRIES TO LOCK IN THE 35 STATES THAT HAVE RATIFIED IT AND SAY 'YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY MORE DEBATE IN YOUR STATES', BUT TO HARASS AND HARASS THE 15 STATES THAT HAVE REJECTED IT REPEATEDLY AND SAY 'YOU CAN ONLY CHANGE FROM NO TO YES'".

VOICE:

(OPT) DURING THE RECENT HOUSE DEBATE, REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS RAILSBACK (REPUBLICAN OF ILLINOIS) CALLED THE EXTENSION A ONE-WAY MEASURE. HE MADE AN EFFORT TO ALLOW STATES THAT HAVE RATIFIED ERA TO RESCIND THE ACTION. BUT ANOTHER CONGRESSMAN DISAGREED. "IF ALLOWED -- SAID REPRESENTATIVE DON EDWARDS (DEMOCRAT OF CALIFORNIA) -- THE MESSAGE WOULD GO OUT THAT CONGRESS SAYS RATIFICATION IS CONDITIONAL. IT WOULD MAKE EVERY STATE A BATTLEGROUND FOR EVERY CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN THE FUTURE". (END OPT)

IN ANY CASE, THE HOUSE DECIDED TO BAR RECISION, WHILE VOTING TO EXTEND THE ERA DEADLINE BY THREE YEARS. SAYS A SATISFIED ELANOR SMEAL:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- SMEAL

"THE RULES OF THE GAME ARE THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND THERE ARE NO TIME LIMITS IN THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT. AND CONGRESS HAS THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE IF INDEED THE TIME LIMIT IS REASONABLE."

VOICE:

THE HOUSE VOTE IN FAVOR OF EXTENSION ENCOURAGED SOME SUPPORTERS TO SAY THAT THE PENDULUM IS SWINGING BACK TOWARD THE ERA. BUT THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

WHEN THE MATTER GOES TO THE SENATE, OPPONENTS MAY TRY TO TALK THE BILL TO DEATH. ONE FORMER SENATOR, SAM ERVIN, SAID DURING RECENT SENATE HEARINGS ON ERA, THAT CONGRESS HAS NO POWER TO EXTEND THE ERA RATIFICATION DEADLINE BEYOND THE ORIGINAL SEVEN YEARS PERIOD SPECIFIED WHEN THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT WAS FIRST SUBMITTED, IN 1972, TO THE STATES.

"WHY NOT SUBMIT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AGAIN?" ASKS MR. ERVIN, WHO BEFORE RETIRING, CHAIRED THE SENATE CONSTITUTION SUBCOMMITTEE.

ALSO INTERESTING TO NOTE IS THE FACT THAT THE MOST RECENT GALLUP AND ASSOCIATED PRESS PUBLIC OPINION POLLS INDICATE THAT ALTHOUGH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC GENERALLY SUPPORTS ERA, IT IS EVENLY DIVIDED ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO EXTEND THE RATIFICATION TIME.

WJL/PY